

Castlemaine Naturalist

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Leopard Orchids

photo Noel Young

Appreciating our Local Birdsong - Andrew Skeoch.

Listening Earth combines the creative talents of Andrew Skeoch (sound recording) and Sarah Koschak (photography) to enable nature to speak for itself. Concerned that nature sounds become relegated to 'atmospheric background' when combined with music, they made a leap of faith and decided to record CDs of purely nature sounds.

At our September meeting Andrew used some of their beautiful photos and sound recordings to increase our appreciation of local bird calls. He slowed down the calls so we could hear their complex nature and he also translated the calls into digital images to demonstrate the uniqueness of each species call.

The highlight of the evening was when he used digital imaging to show how, in a healthy habitat where lots of birds appear to be calling at the same time, every species has its own audio niche of pitch and frequency that enables each to be heard. It clearly showed the intricate nature of an individual bird's habitat and illustrated that if we disturb a bird's habitat we risk disturbing their acoustic habitat as well. To illustrate how important and fragile sound habitats are in nature Andrew gave the example of a rare spade frog, which found itself in the flight path of fighter planes tests. The noise of the planes caused the frogs to stop calling and, research showed, when the planes landed and the frogs commenced calling again, a bird of prey was there to grab the first caller – calling together individual frogs were not detectable but one frog alone became easy prey.

Did you know that - some passerines learn their song and others are born with theirs; some birds unlearn their young-bird song and relearn their call as a mature bird in a new habitat; the audio part of the brain of a Rufous Whistler dies and regrows in spring; individual species have recognisable similarities (quail, slowly rises in pitch); we can hear for 360 degrees and a distance of several kilometres; and the best way to decipher a bird call description in a book is to whistle it?

Andrew described nature as intelligent, evolving, and mysterious. He reminded us that we are all part of nature and sometimes it is good to make a conscious effort to be still and quiet – and listen.

Geraldine Harris

Editors Spot

First I would like to thank Geraldine for taking on the task of compiling last months Newsletter while I was enjoying a holiday in Brisbane. As it turned out, she had to do it all (including writing the principle article on Scotia) while recovering from a nasty flu. Ah well, as they say, that's show biz for you!

Congratulations to our youngest member, **Amelia Rowe**, for recently achieving outstanding results in the annual national "Big Science" competition. Amelia took out the award in the year 7/8 section with a perfect score.

On a more serious note, as we go to press, there is news of the imminent threat to one of the **Swift Parrots'** main nesting areas in Tasmania. You may have heard Chris Tzaros explaining the situation on Radio Nationals' Breakfast program Monday morning (29/9). To quote Debbie Saunders, [co-ordinator of the Swift Parrot Survey]

"As I write, there are large numbers of Swift Parrots preparing to breed in Tasmania within their nesting habitat in the Wielangta Forest on the east coast. However, this old growth nesting habitat is about to be logged, most likely clearfelled.....within the next few weeks. Despite current state and federal legislation that is supposed to protect this endangered bird, and an ongoing recovery program for the species, the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement still allows essential breeding habitat in key breeding areas to be cleared and converted to plantation!"

Birds Australia and the National Swift Parrot Recovery Team are currently lobbying for a last minute reprieve – a 5 year moratorium on logging this area.

Wednesday Wildflower Walks

1. Rita Mills – Kalimna Ridge, 17/9

Kalimna Park was chosen for the first walk - or should it be "Wander"? A beautiful sunny afternoon added to the enjoyment for the 25 people, including several children, who attended. A good number of Field Nats with some knowledge of the plants meant that we were able to identify many plants that our guests inquired about. And, surely, that is what it's all about - the enjoyment of sharing our enthusiasm for our local environment?

List by Natalie:

<i>Philotheca verrucosa</i>	Bendigo Wax
<i>Tetratheca sp.</i>	"Pink Bells"
<i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i>	Gorse Bitter Pea
<i>Diuris pardina</i>	Leopard Orchid
<i>Grevillea alpina</i>	Cats' Claws Grevillea
<i>Drosera peltata</i>	Tall Sundew
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle
<i>Pimelia sp</i>	Rice flower
<i>Hakea sp</i>	

<i>Wurmbea dioica</i>	Early Nancy
<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Gold dust Wattle
<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>	Golden Wattle
<i>Petalochilus fuscatus</i>	Pink Fingers Caladenia
<i>Senecia sp</i>	
<i>Craspedia sp</i>	
<i>Prostanthera</i>	
<i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i>	Grey Everlasting

2. Geraldine Harris – Harcourt Recreation Reserve, 24/9

With over 20 participants and equal numbers of visitors and members we visited what at first glance appears to be a fairly ordinary piece of rubbish littered bush. True to form though this little piece of the recreation reserve provided plenty of interest for our evening walk with lovely patches of Leopard, Pink Finger and Greenhood Orchids and it looks set to provide a lovely display in the next few weeks when the Wax-lip and the Blue Sun-orchids come into full bloom. It is good to see that some work is being done to eradicate the Gorse and Pines from this lovely area. Flowering plants included:

<i>Acacia gunnii</i>	Ploughshare Wattle
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle
<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>	Golden Wattle
<i>Caladenia carneae</i>	Pink Fingers
<i>Craspedia variabilis</i>	Billy Buttons
<i>Cyanicula ceruelea</i>	Blue Caladenia
<i>Daviesia leptophylla</i>	Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea
<i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i>	Gorse Bitter-pea
<i>Diuris pardina</i>	Leopard Orchid
<i>Drosera auriculata</i>	Tall Sundew
<i>Glossodia major</i>	Wax-lip Orchid
<i>Grevillea alpina</i>	Downy Grevillea
<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	Purple Coral-pea
<i>Hibbertia riparia</i>	Erect Guinea-flower
<i>Lazula meridionalis</i>	Common Wood-rush
<i>Microseris sp</i>	Yam Daisy
<i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i>	Grey Everlasting
<i>Philoteca verrucosa</i>	Fairy Wax-flower
<i>Pimelea linifolia</i>	Slender Rice-flower
<i>Pterostylis melagramma</i>	Tall Greenhood
<i>Pterostylis nana</i>	Dwarf Greenhood
<i>Pterostylis nutans</i>	Nodding Greenhood
<i>Pultenaea pendunculata</i>	Matted Bush-pea
<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i>	Creamy Candles
<i>Tetratheca ciliata</i>	Pink Bells
<i>Wurmbea dioica</i>	Early Nancy
<i>Xerochrysum viscosum</i>	Sticky Everlasting



Pterostylis nutans at
Harcourt

Photo by Noel Young

A funny thing happened on the way to Firth Park

Natalie de Maccus

Actually several things happened. In fact they began at the meeting the previous night. With only a small attendance (10) the prospect for the excursion - one definite and one maybe – was not encouraging. There was a suggestion that we cancel. However, I knew that we were to meet Richard Piesse at the Pig and Whistle and that other stalwarts, unable to attend the meeting, intended to go on the excursion. Also I had to consider that people, having read our publicity in the local paper, may turn up at the "Octopus".

Saturday dawned miserably – cold and there had been rain overnight. Gradually the stalwarts dropped out for various reasons. I needed to check with the "maybe" who turned into a "no-be". Now came my dilemma. Two definites – Richard and myself – plus Sheila, our speaker from the night before, who had volunteered to lead us. I tried to put in a quick phone call to warn Richard of the possibility of cancellation. His phone was out of range as I later found out because he was already in the Firth Park area. I phoned Sheila who suggested I remain on "standby" as it was OK by her to cancel at the last minute because she lived only 10 minutes drive from the park.

Decision making time. I had to present at the "Octopus" in case anyone turned up as a result of our publicity. So armed with the week-end crossword puzzle I sat in the car waiting for no-one to arrive. I was also wondering at my chances of finding the P & W. Sheila had given me directions, but I'm not good at navigating alone. Just before the appointed departure time there was a knock on the car window and there stood my Guardian Angel. I breathed a sigh of relief and invited her to join me. She asked if I knew the way. I told her I had instructions to go via Kyneton. GA said a shorter way was through Denver and Springhill. That suited me as I knew that area fairly well, having a friend living at Denver and another at Springhill. It was the P & W end that I wasn't sure about, also I was happy to shift the navigating responsibility to someone else. We set out confidently to Malmsbury, where we took the Daylesford Road. At Denver we turned left into Springhill Road. That's where our troubles started. GA was attending to the VicRoads country directory. I noted with dismay that she, like myself, turned the map upside down. I always knew those maps were printed wrong way round.

We reached an intersection where the road signs didn't co-incide with the details on the map. GA recommended that we should turn right, then make a left turn shortly thereafter. I thought we should go straight ahead because I didn't think there was a left turn from the right-turn road. I felt sure of this because Friend No 2 lives in that vicinity. Deferring to GA advice I turned right. Several kilometres later there was no left turn road, so we returned to the intersection and turned right (my original straight ahead hunch). We travelled some kilometres before we agreed this was not the correct way. We returned to the intersection and turned right (because this was the only road from the intersection that we had not traversed).

Are you feeling confused dear reader, because we were! We both decided pretty quickly that this was not the way. A U-turn and back to the intersection, a left turn into the straight-ahead option, agreeing that maybe we had not tested this road far enough. We were conscious that our proposed meeting time had long passed. Fortunately I had warned Sheila (but not Richard) of my possible lateness.

Having passed our previous turn back point along this road, we soon came to another intersection which we recognized as the one we had been looking for, because there, large as life, was the elusive left turn. We arrived at the P & W flushed with our eventual navigating success and full of apologies for our half hour of lateness. There was Richard, Ken and Marjorie Cross plus Margaret Lees and her daughter Jackie, who are occasional visitors on our excursions. Richard then took over the navigating role and we all arrived safely at Firth Park

After partaking of a very late lunch Sheila took us on a walk around the Park where she identified the following fungi:

<i>Stereum illudens</i>	Purplish Stereum
<i>Nidula emodensis</i>	Bird's Nest fungi
<i>Crepidotus sp?</i>	
<i>Russula persanguinea</i>	
<i>Calocera sp.</i>	Calocera means beautiful horn (there are many species)
<i>Stropharia semiglobata</i>	Dung Round Head (grows on dung)
<i>Discinella terrestris</i>	Yellow Earth Buttons
<i>Gymnopilus junonius</i>	
<i>Marasmiellus affixus</i>	Little Stinker
<i>Poria sp.</i>	
<i>Rigidoporus laetus</i>	

PS If anyone would like a conducted tour to the Pig and Whistle please apply to your president.

Rigidoporus laetus

Firth Park 9/8/2008

Photograph by Sheila Houghton



Morgans Track, Coliban Tanks, Old Tower Track 13/9/08

September excursion - Leader: George Broadway

Report by Geraldine Harris

We visited three different sites and kept adding to our list of flowering plants. At the Coliban tanks we added the Climbing Sundew, Common Hovea, Slender Rice Flower, Dwarf Greenhoods, Early Nancy and Pink Beard-heath. At the Old Tower Track we added Blue Caladenia, Scented Sundew, Prickly Broom-heath, Twin-flowered Beard-heath and Twiggy Bush-pea and immediately after leaving for home we saw some good examples of Spike Wattle and Common Heath from the car. The total list is shown below:

<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Gold-dust Wattle
<i>Acacia aspera</i>	Rough Wattle
<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	Silver Wattle
<i>Acacia oxycedrus</i>	Spike Wattle
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle
<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>	Golden Wattle
<i>Acrotriche serrulata</i>	Honey-pots
<i>Caladenia fuscata</i>	Dusky Caladenia
<i>Correa reflexa</i>	Common Correa
<i>Craspedia variabilis</i>	Billy Buttons
<i>Cyanicula ceruelea</i>	Blue Caladenia
<i>Diuris pardina</i>	Leopard Orchid
<i>Drosera auriculata</i>	Tall Sundew
<i>Drosera macrantha</i>	Climbing Sundew
<i>Drosera whittakeri</i>	Scented Sundew
<i>Epacris impressa</i>	Common Heath
<i>Grevillea alpina</i>	Downy Grevillea
<i>Hakea decurrens</i>	Bushy Needlewood
<i>ssp physocarpa</i>	
<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	Purple Coral-pea
<i>Leucopogen fletcheri</i>	Twin-flowered Beard-heath
<i>s brevisepal</i>	
<i>Hovea heterophylla</i>	Common Hovea
<i>Leucopogen ericoides</i>	Pink Beard-heath
<i>Leucopogen virgatus</i>	Beard-heath
<i>Monotoca scoparia</i>	Prickly Broom-heath
<i>Philothea verrucosa</i>	Fairy Wax-flower
<i>Pimelea linifolia</i>	Slender Rice-flower
<i>Platylobium formosum</i>	Handsome Flat-pea
<i>Pterostylis melagramma</i>	Tall Greenhood
<i>Pterostylis nana</i>	Dwarf Greenhood
<i>Pultenaea largiflorens</i>	Twiggy Bush-pea
<i>Rhytidosporum procumbens</i>	White Marianth
<i>Tetrahiteca ciliata</i>	Pink Bells
<i>Wurmbea dioica</i>	Early Nancy



Pink Bells – ph Noel Young



Blue Caladenia – ph Noel Young

Observations

- ◆ By the last meeting most of the Swift Parrots had departed and Debbie Worland had not seen any that day.
- ◆ Hans Van Gemert reported seeing Donkey Orchids flowering.
- ◆ Denis Hurley noted that Running Postman was prolific in the bushfire recovering areas of the Grampians, and observed an Emu with chicks
- ◆ Rita Mills reported masses of Rough Wattle, Silver Wattle and late Black Wattle on the Taradale walks.
- ◆ Natasha Harris reported that the Red Capped Robins have disappeared at Muckleford, and that 100 plants of the endangered Spiny Rice Flower have been found on the Guildford Plateau.
- ◆ Birds noted recently at home – Eastern Shrike Tit, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Fantail and Horsefields' Bronze Cuckoos, and Pied Butcher Bird – Geraldine Harris
- ◆ At home, Denis Hurley has noted Striated Pardalotes in a nesting box, Wattlebirds chasing Grey Currawongs, Damsel Flies laying eggs on the dam, and Waxlip orchids.
- ◆ Swamp Wallaby on our block, but less kangaroos than usual – Natalie de Maccus
- ◆ 23/9: Four Grey Teal on Lake Joanna; no sign of Powerful Owls in the Botanical Gardens (last seen by me July 14th) – Noel Young
- ◆ Three Lombardy Poplars behind Winters Flat store adj railway line. Each morning at about 6.45 are full of Musk Lorikeets feeding on flowers – George Broadway

Coming Events

Tuesday, 7 October. A Wildflower and Bird survey on the property of Don Morrison at Yandoit starting at the Uniting Church and taking in the old homestead of 'Springvale'. There has been little disturbance over the years and historical remains may be evident. **Meet at the Octopus 9 a.m.**

Friday 7 November: FNC Ballarat has sent an invitation to members to attend their annual Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture, featuring Mr Neville Walsh, Victorian Government Botanist speaking on "Threatened plants in Victoria". 8pm in the Ballarat Horticulture Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory St., Ballarat. Admission is free and supper will be provided.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme

October 2008

- Oct 8:** *Wednesday Wildflower walk 4pm. Leader George Broadway
- Fri Oct 10 meeting:** ANN trip to N.T. in May 2008: Geraldine & Geoff Harris
- Sat Oct 11 field trip:** Mt. Alexander - leaders Geraldine & Geoff Harris.
- Oct 15:** *Wednesday Wildflower walk 4pm Leader Noel Young
- Fri Nov 14 meeting:** Kathy Powers on "Orchids and their interactions with insects"
- Sat Nov 15 field trip:** Pilchers Bridge - leader Chris Morris
- Fri Dec 12 meeting: Members night** "Show and tell"; Bring a plate
- Sat Dec 13 field trip:** Wombat Reservoir

* These walks depart from the Duke St carpark at 4 pm. sharp and return at 5.30.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at Natalies; 65 Johnstone Street, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions for 2008

Ordinary membership: Single \$27, Family \$35

Pensioner or student: Single \$24, Family \$29

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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